

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 047 860

RC 005 084

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TITLE Indian Americans in Omaha and Lincoln.
INSTITUTION Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis.
PUB DATE Aug 70
NOTE 64p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Role, Alcoholism, *American Indians,
Development, Education, *Employment, Health,
Housing, Services, Social Attitudes, *Socioeconomic
Status, *Urban Areas, Urban Population

IDENTIFIERS *Nebraska

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on American Indians who have migrated to urban centers in an effort to escape conditions on the reservations and to find employment and seek a better life. Discussed in the study are 6 tribes which make up the majority of the Indian population in Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska: Omaha, Winnebago, Santee Sioux, Iowa, Ponca, Sac, and Fox (with the majority of Indians coming from the Omaha and Winnebago Indian reservations). The document discusses problematic conditions which the Indian faces in these 2 cities and reports the results of questionnaires sent to agencies in the Omaha and Lincoln areas seeking information on the extent and nature of contact with Indians and on the general conditions of Indians. In keeping with this, attempts to help the urban Indian through Federal assistance and other service agencies are discussed. Seven appendices are included. (EL)

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INDIAN AMERICANS IN
OMAHA AND LINCOLN

by

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August, 1970

PC 005084

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Nebraska's Indian Reservations

Nebraska is the current home of members of six Indian tribes: Omaha, Winnebago, Santee Sioux, Iowa, Ponca, and Sac and Fox. A recent publication of the Bureau of Indian Affairs¹ is the source of the following information concerning the present conditions on these reservations. (Appendix I contains some information about specific reservations.)

Nebraska, with an Indian population of about 2,200, has about 65,000 acres under trusteeship of the Department of the Interior. Most of this land, checker-boarded by non-Indian ownership, is in individually held tracts. Only about 14,100 acres are under tribal ownership.

In Nebraska, little remains to show the lineage and traditions of Indians except among the Omahas and Winnebagos, whose annual summer ceremonial dances reflect elements of their ancient cultural patterns.

Nebraska has assumed full responsibility for the education of its Indian residents. However, the BIA extends financial assistance under a contract with the State to public school districts enrolling Indian children from nontaxable lands which amounts to about \$140,000 a year, and supplements other Federal aids to school districts.

The United States Public Health Service has responsibility for health services to Indians in the state. An Indian Hospital is maintained at Winnebago, Nebraska, and hospital care at Federal expense may be authorized at various community hospitals in other areas.

In an effort to expand employment opportunities and increase income for Nebraska Indians, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides loans to Indian individuals and organizations to develop various enterprises. The tribes themselves have invested \$165,000 of their own funds in credit programs for their members in recent years.

The Bureau also assists eligible Indians to secure employment and vocational training leading to employment in off-reservation areas both within the State of Nebraska and in industrial areas elsewhere.²

Indian Migration to Omaha and Lincoln

In recent years, the number of Indians classified as "urban" has been on the rise. In 1940, the state had an Indian population of 3,401 and only 195 were classified as "urban" by the Census Bureau. In 1960, the total state Indian population was set at 5,545 and urban Indians were nearly one-third of this number (1,971). In other words, in the twenty years covered by the data, the urban Indian population increased by 1000% while the total state Indian population increased by less than 200%. Of those classified as "urban" in 1960, 770 were said to live in the Omaha area and 362 were in Lincoln.

Estimates of the growth in the Omaha Indian population have been made by various agencies. In 1963, the United Community Services gave a number of 1000. The BIA estimated that 1,700 Indians resided in the Omaha area in 1968, while the Omaha office of the Nebraska Employment Service gave a figure of 3,000 in 1970.

The figures for the Indian population in Lincoln at the present time range from a low of 500 to a high of 1,400.

Characteristics of the Omaha Indian Population

Recently, the Indian Center Industries Association of Omaha (to be discussed later in this report) made a statistical study of 225 families that had come to the center for assistance. They found that these 225 families involved 985 individuals, or the family average was 4.38 persons. Family size ranged from 12 to 2 members. The average annual income for one family was found to be \$2,094.55; this figure may be misleading because 28% of the families reported no income from any source. The overwhelming majority of these people (96%) rented their homes. There was a male head of the household in 46.6% of the cases. The study concluded that:

All 225 families can be expected to need emergency food rations at least once.

All 225 families can be expected to use some sort of public medical assistance at least once.

76% of these families reported incomes below the federal poverty guidelines.

68.5% of the families will need some sort of permanent help; 31.5% of the families may be self-sustaining for limited periods.³

The Lincoln Journal recently cited some further statistics:

Nebraska State Employment Office records show that 90% of the Indians counseled are rated as unskilled laborers.

Of the 3,200 Indians in Omaha, a public school survey for 1967-1968 lists only 22 teens in high school at the beginning of the school year and 5 at the end.

Few make it to or through high school. The Indian drop-out rate in Omaha is 77.3%, compared with 17% in the Midwest and 22% nationally.⁴

A telephone conversation with Nate Parker, a member of the board of directors of the Indian Center Industries Association, revealed that:

The tribal makeup of the Omaha Indian population is as follows: Omahas from Macy, 90 miles from Omaha; Winnebago from Winnebago, 11 miles from Macy; and Sioux from the Santee reservation, 225 miles from Omaha.

The urban-reservation cycle is present but not large; most Indians in Omaha are residentially stable.

Indians used to be concentrated in the "ghetto" section but the construction of an interstate highway through the area has effectively scattered the Indian population throughout the city.

There are some suburban Indians who "never look back" and there are others who are very active within the Indian community in Omaha.⁵

A Discussion of the Dynamics of Indian Work in Omaha

Following his graduation from a Methodist seminary, the Rev. Homer Noley was employed in June, 1962, by the Omaha City Mission Society as an "Indian worker." (Appendix IV contains a report by the Omaha City Mission Society giving a detailed history of Indian work in Omaha and

a discussion of the origins of the position that Rev. Noley was hired to fill.) In October, 1962, Rev. Noley issued an interim report, setting out the special problems involved in Indian work. Most of the report has been reproduced in Appendix V for, in Rev. Noley's words,

We ought to be alert to the dynamics involved in working with the Indian people of Omaha; for it may be in the intangible frictions of opposing social personalities that relationships between Indians and non-Indians tend to break down.⁶

The Current Crisis

In May, 1963, Reverend Noley issued another report; this report was directed to the Indian Affairs Committee of the United Community Services and was to aid that Committee in its decision as to whether a special social service to American Indians was needed in Omaha. He entitled his report "The Current Crisis":

The word "crisis" is used because it denotes a crucial stage -- a decisive moment. When a study is made of a condition which almost everyone agrees is generally bad, it is done for a specific reason. . . .The idea is to plan and carry out a strategic assault on the condition. The cruciality of the matter is whether we do it or not.

It is a current crisis because a similar attempt to look into the situation has been tried before. In 1956 an Indian Affairs Secretary was secured and appointed to work under the auspices of the Urban League. After one year, the project was dropped. The efforts of the Indian Affairs Secretary constituted the first crisis. After the lapse of a few years during which nothing in particular was done, there was the feeling that perhaps the community should try again to relieve the problems of the Indian people in Omaha. My coming to Omaha under the auspices of the Omaha City Mission Society constitutes the second current crisis. For a condition, even a bad one, is not a crisis until someone threatens to overcome or change that condition. . . .Thus, the current crisis -- for once again we are threatening what is, according to the standards of the times, an intolerable human predicament.⁷

Background of the Crisis:

Tribal and Community Organization

The people represented in this study are from two principal tribes. The most immediate situation of these two tribes is the reservation just south of South Sioux City, Nebraska. The two principal towns on the reservation are Macy and Winnebago. . . .

Technically, there are two reservations -- the Omaha and the Winnebago. But physically there is a single reservation that contains the two tribes and that is broken up by pockets of non-Indian lands resulting from the land allotment program of the United States Government. One of the principal instigators of the land allotment system was Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior in the 1880's. It is said that the purpose of the system was to hasten the process of acculturation for the Indian by giving him pride of ownership and a competitive foothold. The result of this policy of instant civilization was to produce people without any assets except those held in common by the tribe. It is perhaps not fair to say that all men who bought from the Indians were dishonest, but it would be dishonest to say that all who bought from the Indian people played fair.

The conditions of the people have been spoken of many times. Shock, anger, distaste, and many other reactions have descended from many sources. The Indian people themselves, using the improvised cultural tools of their fathers (who themselves were schooled in the nineteenth century on the problems of existence), still continue to live on in a customary manner. The tendency of the surviving social patterns is toward the communal system. The economy is, needless to say, non-competitive. The educational level is low, although improving somewhat. There is apparently no widespread interest in learning, indicating that there is either no concern for or no way of relating education to the child's future situation in life.

It seems fair to say that the overall condition on the reservation is one of general and advanced cultural deterioration; the condition of the two tribes differing only in degree. The symptoms of deterioration are the following:

1. the precariousness of family identification;
2. the fading but still existing clan system;
3. the presence of the Peyote Cult;
4. the increasing difficulty with such folk habits as unconditional hospitality and other cultural influences;
5. the widespread use of alcohol.

Also symptomatic is the apparent lack of social control coming from the community itself.

The people are friendly and hospitable. Individuals and families have been willing to cooperate with certain individuals and organizations who offered to help them. Different groups and

organizations have approached them with different policies, different methods, and different goals. But together they have achieved a common result: confusion.

Since World War II there has been a movement of these people into several urban settings. Cities receiving substantial numbers of them are South Sioux City, Lincoln, and Omaha, Nebraska. The apparent reason for the movement was to escape the depressive conditions of the reservation and find employment. There was no preparation for the movement. The people gambled and in such a game of chance, where human weakness provides the rules, the cards are usually found to be stacked.

Community Attitudes in Omaha

The incredible thing about general community attitudes is their archaic and unthinking nature. This is the impression gained from numerous conversations and interviews with private and public figures. I have listened with courtesy while people said very patronizingly, "I think we should retain your traditions." Of course, I am in favor of the enterprise, because I am quite proud of my heritage; but I am afraid we would have to do some intensive research to find out what those traditions are before we can think of retaining them. The business of earning a living for a family of eight took so much of my father's time that he didn't have any left to teach me any traditions.

The point is that the people are not being seen as potentially effective citizens. Neither are the Indian people of Omaha seeing themselves as possible contributors to society. The general impression seems to be that these are generally ineffective people who inhabit Sixteenth Street and on whom a lot of our tax money is spent. The attitude I sometimes hear from some of the Indian people is that they are in between the frying pan and the fire -- and it's hot there, too. . . .

The Minority Complex

It is unprofitable to fret about a situation unless you are willing to make some effort to understand the forces at work in a difficult matter. The concept I shall discuss here is one that I hope will show how difficult we make it for ourselves when we are victimized by illegitimate group categorization. I shall call the concept the Minority Complex. . . .

The Minority Viewpoint -- We must remember the non-competitive communal character of the reservation community. The people, in a sense, are equal with one another. Since the communal society has no system of comparison, the need for such comparison is

lacking. As a person from this environment moves into an urban community, he is faced with some harsh realities. First, he realizes that he is an ethnic minority and as such is in a similar boat with other minority groups. Second, he is an economic minority and the places where he can almost afford to live are called "slum" areas. Third, he is a minority in the sense of being an unskilled person. With respect to national statistics he may belong to a fairly large club; but in terms of local significance and employment possibilities, he is a minority in that respect. Furthermore, he is a minority of minorities. Being a relative newcomer and the smallest of the minority groups of appreciable size, he is low man on the totem pole, so to speak. The significance of the latter is that people who are accustomed to being thought of and living as a minority for a length of time are better able to handle the situation in their daily lives; whereas those who are not accustomed to it (and I know a few who think that there is no discrimination against them in Omaha) are more likely to be frustrated. This provides a highly pressurized atmosphere for the Indian person -- uncomfortable to say the least; destructive at its worst.

The Dominant Viewpoint -- Immediately most people will think that I am talking about the Caucasian people when I use the term "dominant group." . . . Although I am speaking primarily of the Caucasian group, the term includes some members of the minority groups who take precedence over the Indian people of Omaha. First, there is the tendency to think negatively of the minority group. Even if a minority group is made up of educated, skilled, and even professional people -- let us say they are exiles from a Latin American country -- the tendency is to think paternalistically toward these people as the community strives to help them become resettled. And paternalistic thinking is negative thinking. The other kind of negative thinking is to subtly deny the apparently powerless the privilege of using what personal resources he has. After negative thinking, there is the apparent habit of the dominant group of lumping minorities. This, of course, refers to the assumption that all minority problems are the same. If you approach a man with a housing problem of a client, he might respond, "Can't he move up there with those other people?" The implication is clear if your client is a member of one minority group and "those other people" are members of a different group. It is a fundamental error to assume that problems of minorities are the same regardless of what ethnic group the respective minorities belong to.

Finally, among a dominant group it is commonly said that perhaps the newcomers can be helped to "adjust" to modern society. This is considerably more difficult than we may have thought since "modern society" is itself undergoing some readjustment. If automation strikes at workers in the dominant group, it strikes doubly hard at the minority member; especially if. . . he has not been able to take full advantage of the industrial jobs prior to automation. . . .

Problematic Dynamics

Even though we may say that the Indian community as a whole is static, this does not mean that there is lack of movement within the community. The dynamics within the static structure must also be taken into account. The nature of the dynamics within the structure can be said to be problematic. The direction of the dynamic is circular. The principle motives that caused many to seek help were crisis factors. Further demonstration of the crisis factor is the timing of requests for help. The day before his trial a man will come and ask if I can help or advise him about his predicament. A telephone call will come at two o'clock in the morning from an anxious father who says his son didn't return home the evening before. A teenage girl calls at one o'clock in the morning and asks if I can come see about her father, who seems to be stricken by some kind of paralysis. I go and find her father in an alcoholic stupor. When the situation is eased, the cycle starts again. Beyond the problematic, there is significant work yet to be done, but it is at the point of the problematic that one must start.

The Apparent Posture

There seem to be three main elements composing the pervasive attitude. These are emotional instability, amoral attitude, and futile outlook.

Emotional Instability -- Actually a more comprehensive term is needed in the place of "emotional," but we will let it stand for this study. Symptoms suggesting this instability are such characteristics as inability or lack of desire to keep appointments, failure to protect employment, impulsive actions, and alcohol dependence.

Amoral Attitude -- The advanced stage of deterioration occurring within the societal structure of the reservation. . . has resulted in a confusion of values. Lack of law enforcement and badly administered law enforcement on the reservation also contributed to the confusion. Social codes and values which should be a part of the conditioning process of childhood are lacking. In their place you may hear some older person making some irrelevant allusion to a clan taboo. Some symptoms of the amoral attitude are a lack of concern for immoral activities, lack of responsibility toward law enforcement agencies, and illicit co-habitation.

When I speak of a general lack of concern for immoral activities, I refer to the degree of protection given to a child against such displays. I also refer to the degree of

reaction against such actions of the parents by the child. As for what constitutes immoral activities, these are usually spelled out by law or are indicated in other ways in the social structure of Omaha. To be sure, there is some confusion of values in Omaha's social structure, too; but this is more a matter of practice than cognizance of those values.

Do not misinterpret this section to mean that Indian people or any ethnic group who falls into this category do not know about the social codes or laws, although it is true that they may lack specific knowledge. They may know about them, but it is a detached cognizance which admits of no feeling for or against them.

Futile Outlook -- There are symptoms which seem to imply a sense of futility for at least some of the people. Some of these symptoms are:

1. type of employment sought;
2. unconcern for the future;
3. irrational attachment for concept of tradition;
4. reversion to tribal cults and religious types.

The type of employment sought is that which is non-specific and temporary. It may be true that it is non-specific because most of those seeking work are non-skilled workers. After working on several specific cases, I sense that the problem goes beyond the non-skilled status of the job seeker. The effects of a disintegrated social structure bear heavily upon a person and produces a type of nihilism that can render a man socially and personally ineffective. Even if a person survives such nihilism and possesses genuine ambition as opposed to wishful thinking, he can be forced into a sense of futility by the frustrations met in a practically hostile society and the final effects of compounded shock in the minority complex. Did you ever hear of the saying "going back to the blanket"? Of course you have!! What we fail to consider sometimes is that the failure of one who "goes back to the blanket" is at least partly due to the failure of society.

The general unconcern for the future is an expression of the nihilism. The impression one gets is that the idea of the future is a foreign concept. It is a concept that can be agreed upon as long as there is not the necessity of doing something about it. This has manifested itself, in the collective sense, in the abortive attempts which have been made to establish industry on the reservation.

It must be noted that when I speak of tradition in relation to the things which are symptomatic of a general nihilism, I am speaking of a concept of tradition. That means I am not speaking of a people's tradition; I am

speaking of what they conceive to be their tradition. In the attempt to recover from the nineteenth century emergency, the adoption of new elements and the modification of others occurred and now form a vague concept on which to hang. An example of an adopted practice is the peyote cult.

When we speak of the reversion to cults and religious types, we are speaking principally of the shock religions. And we are speaking of one of them in particular. . . .

The peyote cult is one of several shock religions that developed in the nineteenth century emergency. The others were put down forcibly. It is significant to note that the introduction of peyote occurred in this part of the country at the same period in which the Ghost Dance was destroyed in 1890. The need for the cult still exists due to the nineteenth century hangover. I do not agree that the cult should continue to exist. The need for religious expression can be met in ways relevant to real problems. . . . I do not think that legislation should be enacted against the peyote cult, but I do think that it should be permitted to die a natural death. It is incorrect to argue for it on the basis of its being an indigenous Indian religion. It is no more indigenous to this part of the country than is Christopher Columbus.⁸

Indian People and Non-Indian Agencies in Omaha: The Recent Past

1954 - 1959

According to a Summary of Indian Welfare Cases Served in the City of Omaha over the period from 1954 to 1959, there has been a gradual decline in the use of community services by the Indian people. The number of families occurring in the 1954 report is 343. The number occurring in the 1959 report is 166. . . .

The types are, of course, public and private. The public welfare agency mentioned in the summary is the Douglas County Assistance Bureau -- the departments of Child Welfare and general relief services. Other agencies mentioned were the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army, and the Visiting Nurses' Association. Besides these agencies, the YWCA maintained what seemed to be the only consistent attempt to provide a service for the Indian people. The Omaha City Mission, in its old location, had a program of sorts going for the Indian people. All of these agencies offered to the people a broad range of services.

What must be said is that the broad range of services offered were neither adequate nor relevant in the light of

the people's predicament. The predicament. . .included the problem of meeting the residence requirement for the public agencies and the church affiliation requirement for certain of the private agencies.⁹

1961 - 1963

The Visiting Nurse Association reported helping "approximately 100 individuals" as of July, 1963, and the Urban League noted it had had applications for employment from 15 Indians as of July. This agency also noted: "Several Indians came in during the year seeking welfare assistance. These individuals were referred by us to the Omaha City Mission Society." St. Joseph's Hospital reported a total of 221 Indians served during 1962 but adds that a great many of that number came from out of the Omaha area "because of our arrangement with the Indian Agency for care of these people through the Clinic of Cheighton's School of Medicine." Douglas County Assistance Bureau reported 20 families active in 1961, the Juvenile Court had 33, Catholic Charities 71, and the Christmas Bureau (World-Herald Goodfellows) assisted 28 families in December, 1961. Travelers' Aid reported eight persons served. Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, and University of Nebraska Hospital either could not reply for lack of records identifying race or because they felt they could not spare the time to answer the inquiry.

It is not known how many of the families listed by all the agencies just mentioned were known to two or more agencies at the same time because no attempt was made to obtain an unduplicated count. However, since the Indian service worker at Omaha City Mission Society has been in constant communication with all these agencies and more, it is probable that his current load of 87 families represents the average number of families at any given time who required intensive service. The services most often requested by the families are for a job, for financial assistance, and for medical care. Next most frequent is assistance in matters concerning violations of the law -- persons who are in jail, or who are to appear in court, or who are to be evicted, or whose wages are being garnisheed for debts.

The YWCA reported 71 families active in its program for Indians, as well as in other YWCA activities. The YMCA reported that ten Indian boys had "been served by the downtown branch of the YMCA and many times they brought guests. Their parents had very little to do with the Boys' Department and so we did not meet them." Omaha City Mission Society reports that in their Neighborhood House Program there are many Indian children who participate in the agency's regular program.¹⁰

Evaluation

Besides welfare services, there are other needs among the people. . . .According to a statistical listing of the services sought, . . .the number one request was for assistance in finding employment. The second largest item is problems relating to youth and delinquency. Following welfare referrals, which is the third item, there are such things as problems relating to law and traffic violations; interagency work with the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs; counseling in illness and death; and a group of miscellaneous services. Subsequent cases following this compilation have not varied from this pattern.

It can be seen that the services sought at our agency are not always the same as those offered at the agencies mentioned in the 1954-1959 summary. Thus it can be said that the intent was right, but the priorities were wrong.

Relevant insights seem to be lacking. This is because the agencies are apparently not staffed or equipped to gain particular insights. Services rendered at a surface level are not conducive to genuine understanding of a problem.

Besides the fact that there is a gap in the available services, there seems to be the feeling among some agencies that there is no special problem.¹¹

Furthermore, the need for continuous work with certain individuals and families requires. . .maintaining a rapport with them. I think that one of the reasons for the decline in the use of community services is that there was the tendency to fragment the requested services by sending them first to one agency and then to another.

. . .The nature of institutions is that they assist those who come to them. If the principal idea is to overcome an overall situation, it could mean that we have to overcome a comprehensive apathy about the conditions among the people themselves. If the apathy is of sufficient depth, the people are not likely to seek help as long as they are able to exist without it.¹²

The Committee discussed the question -- Is it reasonable to isolate one group of families by race or should family service be offered to all families by specially hired staff? The Committee concluded that, at present, the level of adjustment to urban living is lower for Indians than for any other racial group (including the rural southern Negro migrants to Omaha). A further conclusion was that service to Indians has to include teaching the values of the dominant culture as much as it provides certain tangible services in locating resources for jobs, welfare, etc. Another conclusion is that the maladjustment problem of Indians is at a stage where an Indian person, trained in counseling has a far greater degree of success than non-Indian. It was stated that the goal with these people ultimately is to encourage them to relate to non-Indian workers but that achieving that will take another decade or so.¹³

Indian People and Non-Indian Agencies in Omaha: The Present

In the spring of 1970, questionnaires were sent to various agencies active in the Omaha area, seeking information on the extent and nature of contact with Indian people and on the general condition of Indians in Omaha. (Appendix VI contains this questionnaire.) Thirteen of these questionnaires were returned: eight were from various public-supported agencies, four were from religious groups, and one was a privately operated agency. These questionnaires are the source of the information given below.

The Separate Juvenile Court for Douglas County, Nebraska, had no Indian people included in its staff of twenty-two people. In 1969, the court handled the cases of 41 boys and 26 girls and dealt with them as prescribed by statute and by referral to appropriate agencies. When asked about the problems of Indians who come into contact with the court, the reply was made: "In addition to the problems of poverty, alcoholism, child neglect, one finds that the Indian has special problems communicating which give rise to problems with the legal system." When asked if Indians had any problems different from those of non-Indians, it was stated that: "Problems in the area of health are particularly prominent. Preventive medicine is virtually unknown to the majority of Indians." It was felt that Indians are subject to some discrimination in the areas of housing and employment. It was felt that the results with Indian persons were approximately the same as those reached with other persons.

The Omaha Public Library included no Indian personnel among its seventy-five professional employees. It was stated that the library had no information about the racial background of its patrons and no reply was made to the other questions.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps had one Indian on its staff of five persons: this person recruited for the program through the American Indian Center and through referrals. The program usually had between ten and twenty Indian drop-outs enrolled. It was stated that the major

problems Indians face, aside from those connected with poverty and minority status, are those connected with the lack of a daily routine, the lack of consistency, and the lack of parental guidance. When asked about the program's effectiveness with Indians, the reply was made: "Now that we have an Indian counselor, our rapport is better. Our Indian counselor was born and raised on the reservation. Because of this, his understanding and approach to their particular problems is beneficial."

The Douglas County Youth Center is a detention and diagnostic center; its main work is with children detained by Juvenile Court or children who are dependent or neglected. None of the staff members were Indian and it was stated that Indians form less than 3% of the caseload. Many problem areas were cited as being faced by Indian people in Omaha; special reference was made to poor vocational training and to the fact that "they're very naive and get snookered by city folk." It was not known whether the agency was as successful with Indians as non-Indians.

The Douglas County Social Services (formerly known as the Douglas County Public Welfare) informed us that none of the 375 employees had recorded his race as "American Indian" so far. It was stated that 135 families of the 8900 families served were Indian. The problems of Indians were seen to be similar to those of other people seeking some form of public assistance; the special problems of Indians were related to the lack of understanding of the requirements and the need to "prove" the amount of income, family relationships, etc. In addition, the newly-arrived Indian in Omaha was seen to have a different sense of time and a lack of job skills and education. It was stated that the County Welfare had had contact with Indians since its establishment in 1937; it was mentioned that in the past, residence requirements forced the department to turn away many newly-arrived Indians but that is no longer a factor, due to a recent Supreme Court decision. It was believed that the department was successful in many of its cases; special training to deal with Indian people was trying to be provided by having staff members visit at the American Indian Center.

The major problems of the Indians counseled by the Omaha office of the Nebraska Division of Employment, Department of Labor, were related to the lack of suitable employment. This was seen to be the end result of the interaction of three factors: 1) the majority of these Indians are not "qualified" for job openings due to the lack of skills and/or education; 2) various problems not directly related to the job -- such as domestic situations, transportation difficulties, alcoholism, and fear of social acceptance -- lead to the loss of a job by an Indian; 3) some employers, after having "unfortunate incidents with Indians," stereotype all Indians and create an atmosphere of reluctance to risk hiring an Indian employee. The agency attempts to deal with this complex situation by: 1) securing employment in areas for which Indian clients are qualified; 2) informing them of various manpower programs that are available; and 3) encouraging them to try new areas. The department has three Indians on its staff of 120 and maintains liaison with two Indian agencies in Omaha -- the Indian Center Industrial Association and the Indian Community Center Association.

The Omaha City Planning Department has no Indians on its staff and the few Indians who come in have problems with poor housing and underemployment. The agency does not see itself as prepared to deal with these problems and refers all who come in to more appropriate agencies.

The County Judge of Douglas County returned the questionnaire with nearly all questions marked as "not applicable" in this case. It was stated that no Indians are included on the staff of twelve.

The Catholic Social Action Office informed us that they did not have much professional contact with urban Indians because their main concern was with the Indians at Winnebago, Nebraska. Their main activity is the provision of professional skills, experience, and contacts to the tribal council so that the tribal programs can be expedited; the current program involves the development of "experimental" low-cost housing that could be built by local labor. This program attempts to achieve three results simultaneously: better housing, local industry, and community organization.

The Omaha Baptist Center stated that it has contact with twenty-five Indians who come in because they "feel welcome and enjoy the activities." These people were seen to have problems with inferior housing and unemployment (both viewed as a partial result of discrimination) and a high rate of drinking problems. The center dealt with the problems by providing club activities and counseling.

The Greater Omaha Area Lutherans work with the American Indian Center in Omaha. They see their main task as that of providing the center with the resources and funding needed to enable it to do its job.

The Lutheran Family Service sees about 6-8 families a year who seek emergency material and financial assistance. These problems are handled as the situation necessitates. These Indian people were not seen to have any special problems when compared to the non-Indians who come in, aside from "the complexities of moving from simple reservation life where you know everyone to the impersonal heterogeneous life in the city. . . . Families feel rather isolated and apparently don't mix much with Negroes and Whites. Whites and Negroes reject them as well." Although there are no Indians on the staff of 15, one person had worked on the reservation for several years and was familiar with the reservation conditions.

The Island of Hope, which is operated by Rescue Mission, Inc. sees "possibly 10 Indians a day" who come in on a voluntary basis, either as transients needing a meal, a bed, and clothing or in a drunken condition needing detoxication services. The agency sees its role as being the provision of these emergency services. In addition, it processes temporary jobs and it was stated that "There is no discrimination in giving these jobs to Indians who are willing to work and who qualify for the job. Our problem is to find a sober one who wants to work and who will stay sober and get the job done."

A statistical summary of these thirteen responding agencies revealed that ten had no Indian employees at the time the questionnaire was returned;

of the total number of employees (709) of these thirteen agencies, only four were Indian. Only one agency of the thirteen stated that its staff members had had some special training to deal with Indian people; another was trying to provide such training. Several agencies had had "minority group" training; others had had no special training at all. In general, the majority felt that Indians do have special problems in Omaha -- health, housing, education, finding employment, keeping a job, and discrimination (to some degree). Only two of the thirteen gave a definite "yes" when asked if they were as "successful" in dealing with Indians as non-Indians. Four gave a qualified affirmation, one replied negatively, and six did not reply or did not know.

Some tentative conclusions may be stated from this brief review of material relating to Indian Americans in Omaha:

1. The actual number of Indian Americans in Omaha is open to question; even less certain is the proportion of that population needing (or at least requesting) some form of agency assistance. If we accept the generous figure of 3,000 for the total figure, then the 985 individuals covered by the ICIA report form one-third of the total. The major conclusion of that report translates into the statement that roughly 20% of the total Indian population of Omaha will need some form of permanent assistance.
2. The degree of overlap among the persons seen by agencies is unknown. For example, the above figure of 20% (or 660) could be taken to represent the total number of Indians in Omaha needing assistance; therefore, the agencies mentioned in this report may be seeing only that portion of the 660 who need their particular services.
3. This conservative conclusion reached above gives rise to two corollaries:

- a. The comments provided by the agencies should be taken as referring to their portion of the 660;
 - b. There may be a number of Indian individuals who have to spend a great deal of time "making the rounds" of the various agencies..
4. Although only thirteen non-Indian agencies responded to the questionnaire, there is a sufficient degree of overlap with those mentioned in earlier reports to suggest that several of the agencies which have had a continued, direct, and major influence on the lives of this 20% of the Indian American population have been heard from.

Indian Center Industries Association

Several times in this report, the Indian Center Industries Association has been mentioned, usually by white agencies who look to it for help and guidance when dealing with problems presented by Indian Americans in Omaha. The importance of this center to an understanding of the Omaha situation is not to be underestimated; it has been described as being "unique in this city; that is, a center to help Indians which is staffed solely by Indians, with direction coming from a Board of Directors comprised only of Indians."¹⁴ The center is located on the fringe of the inner-city area where problems can be understood and met head-on.

In April, 1967, the ICIA was incorporated in the State of Nebraska, pursuant to the Nebraska Non-Profit Corporation Act. At that time, it stated its nature and purpose:

The Indian Center Industries Association is a charitable organization operating in Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska whose purposes are

- (1) to help the American Indians to help themselves,
- (2) to help them adapt to urban life,
- (3) to make them aware of the available services in
 - a. the fields of education
 - b. the fields of employment
 - c. housing
 - d. hospitalization
- (4) to create jobs through the center for Indians,
- (5) to help in any way we can the American Indian both on and off the reservations,
- (6) to help combat juvenile delinquency by establishing and providing and assisting in a recreation and sport program among the young teenage Indian children, such as baseball, football, track and boxing,
- (7) to help to eliminate prejudice and discrimination, and
- (8) to defend human rights, secured by law.

During this embryonic stage, the center received financial support from several sources, of which the greatest portion came from the local Community

Action Program. However, the organization claims the old Methodist Neighborhood House as its parent organization, since it originally dealt with Indian problems.¹⁵ In this period, the Center acted as a referral center utilizing white social agencies.

ICIA appeared as an independent organization in March of 1969, and opened its Leavenworth Street center in June, with the building provided by the United Methodist Metropolitan Ministries, a staff member paid by GOCA, and operating funds from the Soroptimist Club. The organization applied for membership in the United Community Services but was rejected. In October, 1969, ICIA applied for consideration for innovative funds offered by UCS; the center received over \$18,000 to be used for employee salaries and programs.¹⁶ In addition, professional staff assistance was to be provided by UCS.¹⁷ The Center was granted funds to undertake an all-Indian Head Start program. In April, 1970, ICIA was granted the amount of \$4,800 by the American Lutheran Church for programming in 1970.

The funds will be used to hold sectional workshops involving Indian Centers in Sioux Falls, Sioux City, and Lincoln; to renovate a multi-purpose unit which Gethsemane Lutheran Church owns at the corner of South Twentieth and Castelar; to put into effect an American Indian Senior Citizen Program; and hospital visitation of American Indian patient services.

The grant was made possible by the efforts of the Committee on Inner City Ministries of the American Lutheran Church. . .

This new venture in cooperative social action is launched in an effort to bring Mexican-Americans and American Indians closer together for mutual social improvements.

The Grant is part of the National Crisis Fund, which at its Fourth General Convention held in Omaha in October of 1968, the American Lutheran Church allocated for the purpose of fighting the problems of poverty and racism wherever it exists in our nation.¹⁸

The emergence of ICIA as an independent organization was accompanied by a strong emphasis on self-determination and community involvement. For example, the Acting President stated:

The American Indian Center was established primarily with the involvement of the Indian Community in mind. It belongs to every and all American Indians living in the city of Omaha, Nebraska. This Center needs not only the support of all Indians but would like very much the involvement.

Many people living in the Omaha area are deeply concerned about our problems of being American Indians and living in a large city made up of mostly Non-Indian people. In order for these people to help us they need an organization to work with. This organization must represent the Indian community; therefore I am asking every American Indian living in the Omaha area to get involved! Come up to visit the Center, if not for assistance, just to look around and get to know the staff.

We have several programs at this time and have many more that are being worked on at this time. The present Board of Directors of the Center has placed Community Involvement as the number one priority project for the Center in 1970. I once again, invite you all to join with us, so that every voice can be heard.

In line with this emphasis on self-determination, ICIA adopted new by-laws in April, 1970; these by-laws strengthened the idea of an all-Indian board and Indian direction of programs for Indians. Portions of these by-laws are reproduced below:

Article III

Section 1. Membership in the Indian Center Industries Association shall be open to both Indians and Non-Indians.

Section 2. Each Indian member who is sixteen (16) years of age or older shall be entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the members. No member may have more than one vote. There shall be no proxy voting on matters submitted to a vote at any general membership meeting. Non-Indian members shall be entitled to be present at all general membership meetings and shall have the right to be heard but shall not be entitled to vote, however, the non-Indian spouse of a voting member shall have the right to vote but shall not be entitled to serve on the Board of Directors.

Section 3. The Board of Directors by simple majority vote may suspend or expel a member for cause, after an appropriate hearing. Upon written request signed by a suspended or expelled member and filed with the Secretary, the Board of Directors may, by simple majority vote, reinstate such member upon such terms as the Board of Directors may deem appropriate. The annual dues for voting members shall be \$1.00 per family, \$.75 per couple, and \$.50 per individual. The annual dues for non-voting members shall be \$2.00.

Article V

Section 1. The affairs of the corporation shall be managed by its Board of Directors, consisting of fifteen (15) Indians. The Directors need not be legal residents of the State of Nebraska.

Section 2. Each Director shall be elected for a period of one (1) year. The original term of the initial Board of Directors shall not be considered for the purpose of this Section. No Director may serve more than two consecutive terms. The initial Board of Directors as named in the Articles of Incorporation shall have the authority to appoint additional Directors until the first annual meeting.

Section 3. A regular annual meeting of the Board of Directors shall be held immediately following the annual meeting of the membership. The election of the new officers shall hold preference over all other matters at this meeting.

Section 8. Any vacancy occurring in the Board of Directors for any reason shall be filled by the Board of Directors. A Director elected to fill a vacancy shall be elected for the unexpired term of his predecessor in office.

Article VI

Section 9. No officer or director of the Corporation shall receive directly or indirectly, any salary, compensation, or emolument from the Corporation for acting in any capacity, however, they may receive compensation for actual expenses incurred while conducting organizational business.

Section 10. The Board of Directors shall employ an Executive Director who shall be responsible for the administration of the affairs and operations of the Corporation in accordance with policies laid down by the Board of Directors; shall supervise paid staff; shall perform such duties as the Board may delegate to him; shall be authorized to execute usual documents necessary to the affairs of the corporation; and may be placed under written contract to the Corporation.

Section 11. The Board of Directors shall approve the hiring of all paid staff and shall be responsible for approving the discharging of any paid staff member, unless otherwise specified by the Board of Directors.

ICIA answered the questionnaire that we had sent to all the various agencies dealing with the American Indian population in Omaha. From this

questionnaire, we learn that:

- 1) The center has a staff of five members: an Executive Director; an administrative assistant; a neighborhood worker, a receptionist-bookkeeper; a boy with NYC;
- 2) The center's Head Start program has three staff members: a teacher; a family service worker; and a teacher-aide;
- 3) All the personnel are of Indian descent;
- 4) The center has little dealings with the Non-Indian.

In addition, we learn about the nature of the problems that Indian people bring to the center:

They come for assistance, reassurance, just to be around other Indians, counseling, and for information about or from their reservations. . . .

They have one special problem and that is communicating with non-Indians. They seem to be hard to understand and can't make their needs known.

They face all the problems that confront all immigrants; they feel out of place and sometimes become very frustrated because of lack of communication, transportation, and finding adequate housing. Also they are often short of funds for obtaining the bare essentials such as: stoves, refrigerators, etc.

We also see some of the problems of Indians in Omaha:

In just about every Indian home, the sanitation facilities are very poor.

We have a great need of adequate housing.

We have a higher rate of drop-outs than the non-Indian.

Employment offices only place Indians where there is a minimum amount of money offered for payment.

There seems to be a housing discrimination because two or three real estate agencies refuse to list with the Indian Center.

The Center deals with many emergency cases; these they handle with emergency food and medical services and an emergency fund for such things as death in the family and purchase of food stamps. The Center has a large

volume of referral work.

Much of the center's work has been concentrated in helping individuals and families make contact with appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies. The center was not established with the aim of being a cure-all in itself. . . . This service has been aiding an average of 40 persons or families per month in 1970, with referrals made to such agencies as Douglas County Social Services, Nebraska State Employment Service, Legal Aid Society, and the Concentrated Employment Service.²⁰

Other programs initiated include a drop-in center for teenagers, a voluntary probation services for youths, Indian heritage classes for all ages, personal counseling, all-Indian sports activities, and support of GED programs.

In April, 1970, the center began its Head Start program for Indian children:

We have fifteen (15) Indian children ages four and five, representing the city of Omaha and three of the different tribes living here in the city. There are two Winnebago children, eight Sioux children, and five Omaha children. . . .

We are preparing the children for school in the fall of the year. We do this by a different variety of activities; playing games to teach them to follow instructions, creative art work to teach them to use different implements, to learn the different colors, and to paste things together.

We have field trips for new experiences. We have already gone to the circus and plan to go to the zoo, a farm, and swimming. We also try to give the children a variety of new and different foods. [The children are provided a hot lunch at the center before returning home in the afternoon.]

A parents' meeting is planned. . . . This meeting is very important and we urge all parents to attend. We are going to elect officers for our PAC, Parents Advisory Committee. . . .²¹

In July, 1970, announcement was made that the ICIA had received a grant of \$65,000 for a training program. (President Nixon was quoted as saying, "ICIA is one of the top ten Indian organizations nationally.")²² Pursuant to this announcement, some short job descriptions were sent out

to recruit personnel to carry out this training program. Some of these are quoted below so as to indicate the scope of the new activities:

Associate Director of Operations

Assist Executive Director in the operation, supervision, coordination of programs geared to urban Indian population; develop working relationship with tribal councils; coordinate relocation pre-location work and follow-up activities; serve as liaison with reservations. Any combination of education and experience equivalent to a Master's degree in such fields as community organization, education, or public administration; ability to plan, organize, staff, direct and coordinate a multi-function operation; ability to relate and communicate with staff, program participants, board of directors, and community groups.

Program Specialists (5)

Under the supervision of the Associate Director of Operations, has responsibility for planning, organizing and implementing programs in specific program area geared to serving urban Indian population.

Community Development: Prepares proposals for new programs in coordination with other social action agencies assuring target area resident participation and involvement.

Health and Nutrition: Does research on available services; provides information to program participants; works with existing agencies in reorganizing and serving special needs of Indian families; works with Indian families on meeting health and nutritional needs. Coordination of hospital visitation program and ICIA diagnostic Health Clinic.

Employment: Does research on available services, recruits participants, assists employment agencies in developing job opportunities for Indian applicants. Develops consumer education programs, buying clubs, credit union, etc.

Education: Works with public school system to more adequately serve special needs of Indian youth, assists youth in remaining in school by providing tutoring and counseling, recruits youth for college-oriented programs and assists in securing financial aid, assists adults in taking advantage of prevocational and vocational educational opportunities.

Outreach Worker

Door-to-door contact work geared to reaching urban Indian population and involving them in the programs of urban Indian centers. High school diploma not required. . . .Ability to relate and communicate with program participants; willingness to take part in training programs.

Omaha Indian Club

The Omaha Indian Club (formerly the Orphan Aid Club) is a small organization which was formed to "bring together the Senior Citizens of the Indian tribes in Omaha, for social activities, social services, etc."²³ In May, 1970, the organization had 17 listed members and sponsored a re-sale store, hospital visits, and "Hand Games" at Macy and Omaha. The club works in close association with the ICIA and announcements of its activities are carried in the ICIA Newsletter. The club has purchased a drum from Oliver Sansouci who lives in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Indian Community Center Association

The ICCA is a by-product of a community meeting of Omaha area Indians in late 1968; in October of that year the first board of trustees was selected -- six Indian and six white members. In February, 1969, the center officially opened; in March, it received \$1000 from the Catholic archdiocese and \$500 from the Episcopal Church of Nebraska. In August, the Catholic Archdiocese donated \$500 more. The 1970 budget includes a \$5000 donation for a child care center from the Episcopal Church of Nebraska.²⁴

This organization is mostly volunteer, with participation and problem-solving occurring in various interest committees made up of those who are concerned. There are two paid employees -- an office coordinator who handles referral problems and an executive secretary who handles administrative matters on a part-time basis. ICCA has a number of programs in which members of the Indian community create and display Indian crafts, make television appearances, and hold discussions to encourage Indian culture. The outlook of this organization has been stated by the executive secretary:

This is a city problem, not just Indian, so we should have whites on our board. Indians will always have to work with non-Indians, so why not start working together?

We need businessmen as advisers and resource people, but they don't tell us what to do.

You can't be concerned about Indian problems without preserving the culture.²⁵

Characteristics of the Lincoln Indian Population

There has been very little concrete knowledge concerning the Indian population in Lincoln today; press accounts have given estimates ranging from 500 to 1,400. In order to establish some basic facts about this population, Professor Margot P. Liberty of the University of Nebraska undertook the task of directing a survey of the Indian population in Lincoln. Portions of her "Preliminary Report" have been reproduced below.

Method

Our purpose was to gain, as fast as possible, a set of structured interviews from all available Indian residents of Lincoln. To facilitate comparison with other urban Indian groups, we used a questionnaire developed in research at the University of Minnesota by A.M. Harkins and associates. Initial interviewing was done by students. Subsequent interviews. . . were conducted by two paid Indian interviewers, representing two important subgroups of the local community.²⁶

Sample

The total sample [collected between October 1, 1969 and February 28, 1970] included 108 interview schedules, of which 27 were dropped to provide a revised sample of 81 adults. . . . The sample of 81 adults which remained broke down as follows:

- 35 heads of household (23 male, 12 female)
- 26 spouses of household heads (23 Indian wives of Indian husbands and 3 Indian wives of non-Indian husbands)
- 20 adults, non-household heads (11 male, 9 female)²⁷

General Characteristics

The Lincoln Indian population, contrary to some popular local impressions, is composed essentially of a small, stable group of Omaha families who have more often than not, lived in the Lincoln area for ten years or longer, despite frequent changes of address in the general vicinity. Ties to the reservation remain strong: 47 of 71 respondents in the general sample report several or many trips to the reservation during the past year; 67 of 79 respondents say that the reservation should continue to exist. A high degree of Indian identity prevails: of 80 respondents to the question concerning degree

of Indian descent, 64 said they were full-blood; 9 were of three-fourths Indian descent; only 8 claimed half-blood status or less, or said that they did not know. (Additional findings are given in Appendix VII.)

The Omaha Majority

The Omaha majority in Lincoln emerges clearly. . . . The state proportions (roughly 10% Sioux, 35% Winnebago, and 55% Omaha) might be expected to duplicate themselves in Nebraska cities, but this is not the case. In Lincoln, for instance, we have found 15% Sioux, 1% Winnebago, and 84% Omaha. Foregoing figures on Omaha and Winnebago divergence in Lincoln are easily explained: rivalry in the reservation area adjacent to Winnebago, Nebraska had long existed; and polarity in migration tendencies is augmented by Winnebago attraction toward northern cities where their Wisconsin kinsmen abound; the Omahas have tended to move southward, for many years.

Population

In the Lincoln Indian community, we are dealing with a small Omaha group augmented by a Sioux minority, probably underrepresented in the sample we were able to locate, by virtue of its relatively unstable nature. Since we had hoped, however, to arrive at a reasonably accurate count of all local Indian people, it seemed advisable to consolidate all information at hand as fast as possible. Initial policy of obtaining questionnaire data from everyone available had led, however, to problems of duplication: in the 81 sample, for instance, more than twenty wives could be expected to duplicate information from their more than twenty husbands concerning numbers of children, and so forth.

In order to counteract this duplication and to arrive at a reasonable count, a number of people involved in Indian census activities convened to attempt a preliminary assessment. After several hours of joint consultation, in which individuals reported on each questionnaire were listed by name and all double listings eliminated, a figure of ca. 300 Indians for the Lincoln area was obtained. . . . Children belonging to each family were individually listed by name to avoid double counting and other checks from personal experience were obtained. It was felt that this kind of personal evaluation and analysis was essential in obtaining an accurate population figure, and in assessing data of other kinds from the questionnaire. We erred in failing to obtain counsel from the Indian community during this session, but it was called so hastily that opportunity to do so did not exist. Nonetheless, through the efforts of our Indian interviewers and others, we feel that we succeeded in covering the more stable element of

local Indian community quite well. Allowing a generous margin of failure to contact itinerant families and individuals, our figure of 300 Lincoln Indians might conceivably be raised to 400 but probably not much higher. In the context of local population guesses (ranging from 500 through 1,400) this figure alone is of interest.²⁸

Education Levels

The average number of school years completed for men is 11-years. Men reported their fathers as having an average of 8+ years of completed schooling and their mothers an average of 9- years.

The average number of school years completed for women was 9+ years. Women reported their fathers as having an average of 6+ years and their mothers an average of 8 years.

The average number of completed school years for all 81 respondents in the Omaha population was 10 years.²⁹

Reported Occupations

Of the 33 male respondents, 10 were employed in unskilled occupations; 6 reported semi-skilled manual labor; and 7 were skilled workmen. Two additional people reported clerical-type occupations, while one was a skilled professional and another a learned professional. Five persons did not reply or answered "none."

Of the 48 female respondents, 27 did not reply or answered that they had no occupation. Ten indicated unskilled fields; 6 were employed in semi-skilled manual labor, and 5 were in the skilled occupations. No women were employed in the clerical or professional areas.³⁰

Income -- Heads of Household

Of the eleven female heads of household, 4 reported incomes of less than \$1000; 3 incomes between \$1000 and \$1999; 3 between \$2000 and \$2999; and one reported an income between \$3000 and \$3999.

Of the 22 male heads of household, 5 reported incomes of less than \$1000; 3 reported incomes between \$3000 and \$3999; 4 reported incomes between \$4000 and \$4999; 7 reported incomes between \$5000 and \$5999. One each reported incomes in these categories: \$1000-\$1999, \$2000-\$2999, \$7000 and above.³¹

Indian People and Non-Indian Agencies in Lincoln: The Present

The same questionnaires were sent to urban agencies in Lincoln as were sent to those in Omaha. (Appendix VI contains this questionnaire.) Eleven of these questionnaires were returned: nine from various public-supported agencies, and two from private groups. These questionnaires are the sources of the information given below.

The Separate Juvenile Court for Lancaster County reported that none of the employees were Indian; this Court handles the cases of 4 or 5 Indian families during the course of a year. As is common in juvenile courts, the problems are ones of ungovernable behavior, delinquency, and truancy. The court does not see these few cases as indicating that Indians in general in Lincoln have any special problems. It was mentioned that Indians in Lincoln do have some problems with finding employment and remaining in school. It was felt that the court is as successful in dealing with Indian children as with other youngsters from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

The Lincoln Public Schools reported that 20 of its staff of 2,261.5 employees are Indian. In May, 1970 there were 134 school children in these Lincoln schools classified as "Indian." It was stated that Indians in Lincoln do have special problems with the educational system:

Many are migrant and their children have a history of lack of continuity in one school. Achievement problems are present, as are lack of motivation from parents and lack of adult models. Attendance is often a problem with some families. The level of educational expectancy of many parents is low.

The schools have various programs which could be of benefit to migrating Indians -- Head Start, Follow-Through, Title I, and NYC. In addition,

Most Indians in Lincoln reside in our "target-area" school areas. These schools are prepared to better assist minority group children through the Title I, ESEA, program. Besides the regular school program, services in health care, free lunch, social work-counselors, and recreation are provided.

It was felt that Indians new to the city face problems of housing, vocational placement, and low inter-racial image. It was felt that the schools have a limited degree of success with its Indian students.

The Public Health Nursing Division of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department informed us that none of the 49 employees of the Health Department are Indian. The Public Health Nursing Division handles the cases of 44 Indian families (of the possibly 150 families living in Lincoln at the present time). When the question, "Do Indians who come to your agency have special problems different from non-Indians?", the following list was given:

More alcoholics, suspicious of all non-Indians, non-communicative, poor diets, malnutrition, crowded housing conditions, unemployment (usually don't want to work), very dependent, often in trouble with the law. More prone to TB (by our count). Less education. Due to an existing law, they must report back to reservations at intervals; this causes loss of job and makes them more migrant. More mixed marriages. Usually filthy and cluttered homes and yards. They are very clannish.

The following information was given about public activities concerning the health and medical problems of Indians:

The State Health Department assists and City Mission helps the migrant Indian. We would see them for health supervision, TB surveys, Well-Child Conference, and School Health. Home visits are made by the PHN to the home to refer them to local agencies for financial help, job training, employment, and for children's recreation and entertainment.

Our agency has been in contact with Indians since 1914. The Public Health Nurse has followed many of these families for four generations.

It was stated that, although none of the personnel has had any special training to deal with Indian people, the agency is as successful in its dealings with Indians as it is with non-Indians.

The Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission has no Indians included in its staff of nine. The commission is empowered to act only when complaints of discrimination have been filed with it. It has handled several cases of Indians charging discrimination in employment and housing. It was said that the commission is as successful in handling complaints made by Indians as those made by other minority groups but the Commission has had difficulties in follow-through due to their moving from house to house in the low income areas of Lincoln.

The City of Lincoln Commission on Human Rights informed us that one Indian person served on the 11-person board of Commissioners. The Commission works with the membership of the Lincoln Indian Center and the Salvation Army Pow Wow Group in its efforts to find housing for Indian people, to aid Indian people to apply for employment through the outreach program, and to act upon complaints of discrimination. The Commission on Human Rights also acts as the relocation agency for the city. It maintains a list of available housing and assists in the negotiations prior to rent or sale of property. It was explained that:

Non-whites have a serious problem finding housing. There is a critical shortage of rental property. Indian families often become discouraged and leave the city because of problems of employment and housing.

Personnel have attended several institutes conducted by the Lincoln Indian Center; the commission feels that it is as successful in dealing with Indians as it is with the total non-white population.

The Lancaster County Sheriff's Office said that there are no Indians included on its staff of thirty-one; in addition, it was said that there was no way to estimate the number of Indians that the office typically works with because "any contact we have is usually because a crime has been committed." All problems are handled according to the law and it was believed that this agency is as successful in dealing with Indians as non-Indians.

The Lancaster County Division of Public Welfare said that there are no Indians on its staff of 105. The Division usually works with about 25 Indian persons, all of whom are treated "the same as other recipients." It was believed that Indians face no special problems when compared with other welfare recipients, but it was stated that Indians do have problems relating to sanitation, health, housing, education, and employment. Indians do not have problems involving discrimination in Lincoln, however.

The Lincoln City Libraries informed us that none of its employees (staff or professional) are of Indian descent. The library comes into contact with Indian people as they constitute part of the general public. No additional comments were made, although several newspaper articles were cited.

The Lincoln Police Department informed us that none of its 180 officers were of Indian descent. It was stated that the department has some contact with 75 families, or about 300 persons, of Indian ancestry. The department has taken a "formal interest in helping them become established" and in order to do this, various projects have been undertaken:

1. Education regarding alcoholism, specifically an AA for their group;
2. Special tutoring for children;
3. Classes in home nursing, child-care, etc.;
4. Job training for adults;
5. Assistance in providing bedding and household furnishings;
6. Visiting nursing service.

In general, Indians were seen to have three special problems when compared to non-Indians in Lincoln: larger percentage of alcoholism; inability to hold a job; and a tendency to migrate. In addition, Indians who are new to the city face more problems: unfamiliarity with school attendance laws; inability to adjust to the demands of a job, especially punctuality; and an inability to handle money and manage their own affairs. The department was seen to be able to deal with these problems in a limited way, chiefly through the organization of voluntary help from churches and other groups. Several areas of general problematic nature were mentioned:

Sanitation is a problem only with the migrant Indian. Our locals who have legal residence are reasonably well-situated in homes with modern facilities.

Health conditions in general are above [national] Indian averages. Only one case of TB, very low infant mortality rate.

Poor educational background causes many to drop out before finishing high school.

An Indian who truly wants to work on a steady basis has no difficulty in finding employment. Many find themselves unwilling to keep a job because of their unwillingness to sacrifice daily leisure hours. They do not recognize the need for self-discipline.

The Lincoln Indian Club is a voluntary organization of members of the Lincoln Police Department:

We originally organized the Lincoln Indian Club, met with them twice a month for approximately 10 years. These family get-togethers provided activities for all ages, crafts, classes in cooking, sewing, childcare, home nursing, etc. We also solicited help from local churches for clothing, bedding, furniture, etc.

We feel Indians have responded reasonably well. They are well-accepted in the public schools. Hot lunches are provided free if the situation warrants. All are provided with well-equipped beds. All have access to the city clinic when income is limited. A layette and crib is provided each new infant. Our infant mortality rate is practically nil.

Many problems continue to exist, chiefly inability to meet the demands of employment. Even though trained for the job, they lack self-discipline, therefore are not reliable.

It was estimated that this group works with approximately 250 Indian persons.

The Lincoln Council on Alcoholism informed us that it had little contact with Indians. Those whom it does meet are usually referred to those agencies which are equipped to meet their needs.

A statistical analysis of these responses showed that, of the 2,753.5 employees employed by these 11 agencies, only 21 persons are of Indian descent. Only three of the eleven indicated that staff personnel had received some special training that was designed to equip them in some way to deal with Indian people in Lincoln. Five of the agencies gave an unqualified affirmative answer when asked to evaluate the success of their dealings with Indians; four others gave a qualified yes; one said that there was no way to know while another did not answer the question.

Some tentative conclusions may be stated about the Indian American population in Lincoln:

1. The actual number of Indian Americans in Lincoln seems to be between 300 and 400. The number of persons needing some form of public assistance seems to be quite low when compared to Omaha; for example, only 25 persons were served by the welfare department.
2. Again, the degree of overlap among agency clientele cannot be estimated at this time.

Lincoln Indian Center, Inc.

In June of 1969, the Lincoln Indian Center was formed to encourage "integration of the city's 1,440 American Indian residents, regardless of time honored tribal differences." ³² The Center's purposes are as follows:

1. To establish a continuing program which will help the American Indian help himself;
2. To help the American Indian adapt to urban life;
3. To make the American Indian aware of the available services in education, employment, housing, hospitalization, alcohol treatment and rehabilitation, credit union financing and membership;
4. To organize and create artcraft industries and develop job opportunities through the Center;
5. To help in any way possible the American Indian both on and off the reservations;
6. To help combat juvenile delinquency among American Indians;
7. To encourage sports programs among American Indians such as but not limited to baseball, football, track and boxing;
8. To help eliminate prejudice and discrimination;
9. To defend human rights of the American Indian, guaranteed by law.

Membership in the Center is not limited to American Indians but the board of directors must be made up of representatives of all tribes in the organization. This includes the Pottawatomie, Sioux, Winnebago, Cherokee, Ponca, and Lumbee tribes (as of June, 1969). ³³

City Mission, which has been involved in Indian work for several years, encouraged the Indian Center concept. Its director stated that:

It's logical that the emergency relief which the white man has provided on a piecemeal basis be centralized in a project administered by the Indians themselves.³⁴

The City Mission has committed itself to guaranteeing the first half-year's rent for the Center, and its director is the registered agent.

The Reconciliation Task Force of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) requested that 77% of the funds collected in a \$37,500 state drive conducted in 1969 be earmarked for Lincoln and Omaha projects, chiefly Indian centers. The involvement of the 72 Nebraska churches in this effort began during an April, 1969, state convention. The director of the drive explained that an informal group at the convention decided that:

Something had to be done for the Indians, on a no-strings-attached basis, to make them partners in America. This is the real war on poverty. But the Indian has learned from the blacks to maintain his independence in forming bootstrap programs. The Indian centers are much further ahead than if they had asked for white leadership.³⁵

While struggling to remain independent, Indian Center, Inc. did seek advice from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Lincoln Action Program, and the Indian Center Industries Association (ICIA) of Omaha.³⁶ However, in an interview given in June, 1969, the president stressed that the organization had no connection with the Lincoln Action Program. "Most of our people don't feel they have received much help from LAP to date in raising living standards."³⁷

The Center was informed that it could apply for federal grants for programs designed to help the members help themselves. In October, 1969, a proposal was presented for a study of the vocational rehabilitation needs of the American Indian. This proposal, authored by the state vocational rehabilitation service counselor attached to the Lancaster County Public Welfare office, was submitted to the board of directors of the Indian Center, Inc. for their approval. If the board approved the proposal, funding from HEW would be sought. The survey would be done entirely by Indians.³⁸ The Nebraska Conference of the United Methodist Church, working through its Indian affairs director, the Rev. Homer Noley, will be the sponsoring agency for whatever HEW funds are received.³⁹ HEW would fund \$10,000 of the needed total of \$11,000 for the study. An additional \$1000 would be provided by the Urban-Rural Crisis Fund of the United Methodist Church.⁴⁰

In May, 1970, Nathaniel Parker, an Omaha, and a member of the board of directors of the Indian Center Industries Association in Omaha, gave a progress report on the Lincoln Indian center:

Lincoln has had difficulty in obtaining funds to begin operating costs. They have several volunteer programs which were formed by their Indian membership, such as:

- arts and crafts;
- Indian Alcoholics Anonymous;
- tutorial program for Indian children;
- staff person temporarily provided by the Lincoln Action Program to assist in problems of employment and welfare.

Mr. Ralph Ware, a member of the Kiowa tribe, has been hired as consultant for board leadership training and community development. Much progress has been made with Mr. Ware's involvement and hopefully the organization will be self-supporting with a 15-member board of directors within the next 30 days.⁴¹

Mr. Parker works for the United Indian Ministries office under the supervision of Rev. Homer Noley. His involvement with the Lincoln Indian center has primarily been in the development of an all-Indian board of directors, a fund-raising campaign, and the writing of proposals for the board of directors

The Indian Minority and the Non-Indian Majority

For purposes of sociological description, the Indian populations of Lincoln and Omaha have been treated separately in this report. However, they are united in two specific ways:

1. Tribally, in that the Omaha tribe forms the majority of the Indian population in both cities;
2. Organizationally, in that the Indian centers have established lines of communication and cooperation.

It must not be thought that the urban Indian population is separate from the reservation population; the many return visits by those in Lincoln and the frequent references to reservation affairs in the ICIA newsletter in Omaha give some indication of this.

In addition to these natural times, Indians in Nebraska are apparently united by something else: prejudice and discrimination by non-Indian residents in the state. Passing references have been made to discrimination by the various agencies contacted by questionnaire; a fairly extensive analysis of its dynamics has been quoted. However, certain specific incidents will serve to give focus to these vague statements.

A letter printed on the front page of several weekly Nebraska newspapers on July 31, [1969] touched off an explosive situation in the Thurston County, Nebraska vicinity, an area encompassing the Winnebago and Omaha Indian reservations.

The letter, written by 70 Thurston County residents, dealt with the alleged rape and kidnapping of a 20-year-old woman by 7 Indian men north of Macy.

The writers of the letter, charging that Indians in that county receive preferential treatment, conjectured that the men involved would probably only be given short sentences and then turned loose on the community before half their sentences were served. They pointed to a previous incident in which two couples were supposedly beaten by Indian attackers, claimed the crime was never publicized, and stated:

"And I would guess that the criminals were gently reprimanded and reminded that this was a 'no-no' and the 'Great White Father' who doles out the monthly checks and commodities for this 'poor, misguided minority group' was unhappy with them. But they received their checks the next month so they can stay drunk and continue their drunkenness and criminal acts."

The writers stated that they were sick and tired of this "favoritism" and wanted their letter published in the hopes that "this crime is made public and the severe punishment it merits is given to these 7 offenders."

An editor's note which followed the letter in the South Sioux City Star listed the names of the seven defendants and stated that: "Undoubtedly residents of Thurston County will get an opportunity to determine the guilt of the men, unless they plead guilty, for a jury will be selected from among the citizens of the county."⁴²

The reaction of the Indian community was immediate. The Omaha tribal members asked that the trial be moved to a more suitable part of the state, while the Winnebago tribe initiated an economic boycott of the

stores in Walthill, a longtime Indian trade center and the town where the letter had originated. One tribal member explained:

Feeling is strong here and we want to retaliate in a peaceful Christian-like manner to bring to the surface the things which we face and endure every day at the hands of our non-Indian neighbors.⁴³

The Winnebagos pledged to continue the boycott, which began the day after the appearance of the letter, until two demands were met: 1) a public apology by the 70 signers of the letter; 2) a human relations board in Thurston County to ease friction between white and Indian residents. (Approximately 2,000 of Thurston County's total population of 7,000 are Indians.) After a few days, the mayor of Walthill released a statement from the 70 which said that their first letter wasn't meant to condemn "the whole Indian nation" and that they were sorry for any "misunderstanding" which had arisen. They did not apologize for their concern over the "lawlessness that now exists." The Winnebago tribe rejected this "alleged apology" and continued the boycott. Gestures were made toward meeting the second demand but no leadership seemed to emerge from the white community. Finally, the Omaha and Winnebago representatives took the matter into their own hands and arranged to meet with the Nebraska governor in hopes of gaining official state recognition for the board.

Although we have no information as to the results of this particular meeting, we do know that the Governor issued a proclamation designating February 16 - 20, 1970 as "Indian Recognition Week." This proclamation was in response to a request written by the administrator of the Macy Public School. The purposes of this week were as follows:

To honor the American Indians, the Native Americans of Nebraska; to honor those Indians who are very much a part of the prehistory and history of the Nebraska land; to honor those Indians from Nebraska who have assisted in defending this country and have assisted in building it, to honor those Indians from Nebraska who are presently making noteworthy contributions to society both on the Omaha, Winnebago, and Santee Reservations and in the cities. . . .⁴⁴

This "recognition week" was observed at Macy with activities ranging from ancient hand games to a display of modern fashions. As far as we know, this was the extent of "Indian Recognition Week" in Nebraska.

In addition to the proclamation of "Indian Recognition Week," the governor authorized the creation of the Governor's Commission on Indian Affairs. The members of this state Indian commission are representatives of the urban Indians and reservation Indians. The urban Indians are represented by members of the Indian centers in Omaha and Lincoln. The reservation Indians are represented by members of the tribal councils of Macy, Winnebago, and Santee. It has been decided that the director of the commission will be of Indian descent; the final selection was to have been made in May, in conjunction with the state OEO, the regional OEO, and members from Washington, D.C. Hopefully, as the commission gains strength and support, it will become an effective voice for the Indian community.

Footnotes

¹Bureau of Indian Affairs pamphlet "Indians of Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), 20 pp.

²Ibid., pp. 16 - 20.

³"Statistical Survey: American Indian Center, Omaha Nebraska" (no date), pp. 2 - 3.

⁴Lincoln Journal, October 8, 1969.

⁵Telephone conversation, July 9, 1970.

⁶Rev. Homer Noley, "A Discussion of the Dynamics of Indian Work in Omaha" (October 17, 1962), p. 1.

⁷Rev. Homer Noley, "The Current Crisis" (May 16, 1963), preface.

⁸Ibid., pp. 1 - 10.

⁹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰"Report from the United Community Services Indian Affairs Committee" (November 12, 1963), p. 2.

¹¹"The Current Crisis", pp. 11 - 12.

¹²Ibid., p. 14.

¹³"Report from the UCS. . .", p. 9.

¹⁴An untitled mimeo report from United Community Services, dated May, 1970, p. 1.

¹⁵Susan Kaeser, "Indians March to Beat of Two Different Drums," Omaha Sun (Life in the City section), (January 8, 1970), pp. 5 - 6.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The untitled mimeo report, p. 2.

¹⁸ICIA Newsletter, (May, 1970), p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰The untitled mimeo report, p. 3.

²¹ICIA Newsletter, (May, 1970), p. 7.

²²Omaha Morning News, July 9, 1970.

²³ICIA Newsletter, (May, 1970), p. 4.

²⁴Kaeser, pp. 5 - 6.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Margot P. Liberty, "Preliminary Report: A 1970 Census of the Indian Community of Lincoln, Nebraska" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska / ditto /, July 1, 1970), p. 4.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 5 - 6.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 8 - 11.

²⁹Ibid., p. 17.

³⁰Ibid., p. 15.

³¹Ibid., p. 16.

³²Bess Jenkins, "Lincoln's Indians Join Together to Encourage Integration in City" Lincoln Journal, June 8, 1969.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Gene Kelly, "Lincoln Indian Center, Inc. Goal: Build Up Pride and Self-Respect" Lincoln Journal, October 10, 1969.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Jenkins, op. cit.

³⁸Anonymous, "Proposed Survey Would Study Needs of Indians" Lincoln Journal, October 15, 1969.

³⁹Kelly, op. cit.

⁴⁰Anonymous, op. cit.

⁴¹ICIA Newsletter (May, 1970), p. 9.

⁴²B. B. Scott, The Buckskin (Futala, Oklahoma: November, 1969), no page numbers.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Donald David Ross, "The Omaha People" The Indian Historian, Vol. III (Summer, 1970), p. 21.

Appendices

i

The Omahas

After separating from other members of the Dhegiha group in their ancient journey from the southeast, Omahas settled at the mouth of the Missouri River, where they lived for many years. With the Poncas and Iowas, they slowly traveled north to what is now Minnesota, but were again forced to migrate because of the depredations of the Yankton Sioux. The three tribes then settled in what is now South Dakota.

Around 1802, a smallpox epidemic reduced the Omahas to only a few hundred. Survivors deserted their homes to move farther down the Missouri, where Lewis and Clark visited them in 1804. Omaha hospitality and friendship to whites, established during that stay, became a tribal tradition that never wavered.

In 1856, the tribe was placed on a reservation in northeastern Nebraska, a site they themselves selected. (See Appendix II for an Omaha's account of this.) Their descendants still live in this area, on lands since diminished to about 28,000 acres.

The Omahas, largest of the Nebraska tribes, with over 1,100 members, were awarded a judgment of \$2,900,000 by the Indian Claims Commission in 1960, as recompense for lands ceded by them under treaties in the past. A plan developed by the tribe and approved by the Secretary of the Interior provided a per capita payment of \$750 to tribal members; an expanded credit program; and a land purchase program. The tribe set aside \$250,000 for a program of industrial development.

Construction of 30 low-rent housing units on the Omaha Reservation has been made possible through extension of Public Housing Administration programs to Indian reservations.

The Poncas

Always friendly to whites, Poncas lived quietly and peacefully on their ancestral lands during early Nebraska territorial days. But by 1856, settlers had begun to crowd in on their hunting grounds and kill their game. The tribe was removed by treaty to lands farther west, but there, farming was made impossible by the neighboring Sioux. In 1865, to reward their "constant fidelity," the Government allowed the Poncas to return to their homes on the Niobrara. But they were not to remain for long. An 1868 treaty inadvertently assigned all Ponca lands to the Sioux, and a few years later the tribe was ordered to remove to Indian Territory.

It was then that the Poncas' famous chief, Standing Bear, came to prominence. From the beginning he had strongly opposed the removal order, but without success; his people were forced to leave their Nebraska homes. Within a year almost a third of the tribe had died in Indian Territory, among them Standing Bear's son.

The Ponca chief, determined to bury his son at home, set out in the winter of 1878 with his son's body and a small following, and 3 months later, arrived at the Omaha Reservation. Soldiers appeared with orders to arrest Standing Bear and his followers and return them to Indian Territory.

But on the way back, as the party paused near Omaha, Standing Bear was interviewed by a newspaper reporter. When the Ponca story was published, Omaha citizens, aroused, arranged for Standing Bear to be represented without charge by local attorneys, who sued for a writ of habeas corpus for the Indians.

The Ponca prisoners were denied this safeguard against illegal detention on the basis that they were not persons within the meaning of the law. But soon thereafter, during their trial in the United States Court at Omaha, Judge Dundy ruled that Standing Bear and his band should be set free, holding that an Indian was a person within the meaning of the law of the United States, and that therefore no rightful authority existed for removing any of the prisoners by force to Indian Territory. (Appendix III contains another version of this affair, much of it in Standing Bear's own words.)

Following this important decision, Standing Bear and his party settled on an island in the Niobrara River which had been a part of their old reservation. Other Poncas from Indian Territory joined them, and they began to farm again.

Their descendants still occupy lands in northeastern Nebraska, where they are among the best farmers in the Niobrara area.

The Poncas of Nebraska have asked Congress to provide for the withdrawal of Federal services and distribution of tribal assets to eligible members of the small tribe. Termination proceedings for the Poncas are nearing completion.

The Iowas

Always a small tribe, the Iowas are members of the Chiwere branch of the Siouan linguistic family. They were once farmers in the Great Lakes region, who gave up agriculture for fur trapping and trading as Europeans moved into their country in the 17th century. Iowas were famous for their pipes, manufactured of red pipestone from Minnesota quarries.

After fighting on the British side in the War of 1812, Iowas ceded all their lands east of the Missouri River, and with the Sacs and Foxes were given a tract of land on the west bank of the Missouri River.

The Iowa Reservation is a tiny area straddling the Kansas-Nebraska border along the Missouri River.

The Sacs and Foxes

Sacs and Foxes, once two separate and distinct members of the Algonquian linguistic family, are today considered one tribe. They were Woodlands Indians, whose original home was in the Great Lakes region, where they lived in bark lodges, traveled by canoe, cultivated maize, beans, squash, and tobacco, and harvested wild rice. Their warriors were known by the white clay print of a hand on back or shoulder.

Actual confederation of the two tribes appears to have been made around 1700. It was strengthened when Foxes joined Sac Chief Black Hawk in his 1832 "War" against white settlers in Illinois.

Sacs and Foxes sold their Iowa lands and were given a reservation in Kansas [territory] where, by 1846, all the Sacs, and about one-fifth of the Foxes, had gathered. (In the late 1850's, some Fox chiefs and most of their followers moved back to Iowa, where they bought land and settled.)

The Sac and Fox Reservation to the west [of the Iowa Reservation] also lies in both States [of Kansas and Nebraska].

The Santee Sioux

The Sioux are still represented in Nebraska by members of the Santee, or Eastern Division, who originally lived in Minnesota but were removed from there following their participation in the 1862 Sioux uprising led by Chief Little Crow against white settlers.

After many treaties, executive orders and statutes, they were finally settled in northeastern Nebraska on a reservation originally consisting of more than 115,000 acres, most of which has passed from Indian ownership.

Of all Nebraska Indians, Santees have adapted most to white culture. All members of the tribe speak English. They have lost almost all traces of their native culture, and most of them are active Christians.

The Winnebagos

The history of the Winnebagos, who are closely related to the Chiwere branch of the Siouan linguistic family, has been marked by war, alcohol, disease, and flight over many years. In their Wisconsin homelands, the Winnebagos were almost entirely destroyed by the Illinois, but captives were at last allowed to return, and again formed a tribe.

Winnebagos fought with the English in the American Revolution and in the War of 1812, and were allied with the Sacs and Foxes during Black Hawk's raids. Loyalty to their Sac and Fox friends forced them to remove from

Wisconsin to Iowa, with much suffering. Smallpox hit the tribe twice before 1836, and in that year a third attack killed about one-fourth of their survivors. In 1845, those who remained returned to the Great Lakes area, this time to Minnesota.

Following the 1862 Sioux uprising in Minnesota, angry and frightened settlers demanded that all Indians be expelled from the State. The Winnebagos, although not guilty of any attacks on whites in the area, were forced to move from Minnesota and settled on the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota, where they were once again close to their ancient enemies, the Sioux.

They abandoned their South Dakota lands, and in the winter of 1863-64, through driving snow, they traveled to the lodges of the Omahas in Nebraska. Of the 2,000 Winnebagos who started the journey, only about 1,200 destitute, sick and starving members survived. The hospitable Omahas provided food and shelter, and in 1865, sold a strip of their reservation to the Government, which in turn deeded it to the Winnebagos. Additional lands were allotted to them in 1874.

So, after a long series of disasters, the wandering Winnebagos came to rest in Nebraska, the last Indian tribe to enter the State.

Source: Bureau of Indian Affairs pamphlet "Indians of Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa" (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 3-5, 12-13, 17, 20.

Francis La Flesche, Omaha, wrote a book, The Middle Five, about his school-boy experiences during the 1860's. The following is from the preface of that book:

Most of the country now known as the State of Nebraska (the Omaha name of the river Platt, descriptive of its shallowness, width, and low banks) had for many generations been held and claimed by our people as their own, but when they ceded the greater part of this territory to the United States government, they reserved only a certain tract for their own use and home. . . . The Omahas were living near the Missouri River in three villages, some four or five miles apart. The one farthest south was known as Ton'-won-ga-hae's village; the people were called "wood eaters," because they cut and sold wood to the settlers who lived near them. The middle one was Ish'-ka-da-be's village, and the people designated as "those who dwell in earth lodges," they having adhered to the aboriginal form of dwelling when they built their village. The one to the north and nearest the Mission was E-sta'-ma-za's village, and the people were known as the "make-believe white-men," because they built their houses after the fashion of the white settlers. Furniture, such as beds, chairs, tables, bureaus, etc., were not used in any of these villages, except in a few instances, while in all of them the Indian costume, language, and social customs remained as yet unmodified.

In those days the Missouri was the only highway of commerce. Toiling slowly against the swift current, laden with supplies for the trading posts and for our Mission, came the puffing little steamboats from the "town of the Red-hair," as St. Louis was called by the Indians, in memory of the auburn locks of Governor Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame. We children used to watch these noisy boats as they forced their way through the turbid water and made a landing by running the bow into the soft bank.

The white people speak of the country at this period as "a wilderness," as though it was an empty tract without human interest or history. To us Indians it was as clearly defined then as it is today; we knew the boundaries of tribal lands, those of our friends and those of our foes; we were familiar with every stream, the contour of every hill, and each peculiar feature of the landscape had its tradition. It was our home, the scene of our history, and we loved it as our country.

Source: Edward H. Spicer, A Short History of the Indians of the United States, (New York: Van Nostrand, 1969), p. 279.

In May, 1962, the Omaha City Mission Society issued a report entitled "Service to American Indians: Proposed New Work" which gave much of the history of non-Indian agency work with Indians in Omaha. That report has been reproduced below for the reader's information and consideration.

The helping agencies in Omaha have attempted in various ways and in differing degrees to meet the needs of the American Indians living in the city. A most serious effort was made, beginning in September, 1954, by the Family and Children's Division of the United Community Services to find a most satisfactory method of meeting the needs of this minority group. After many months of study and numerous meetings, the following list of "unmet needs" was made:

UNMET NEEDS

I. To improve the economic situation

A. Long range needs of permanent residents

1. Intensive education about the battery of services available in health, recreation, welfare, employment, and housing.
2. To develop Indian leadership which can inform other Indians about these services easily and well.
3. Eradication of barriers to adequate housing.
4. Changing of attitudes among employers so that more qualified Indians are hired.

B. Immediate and urgent needs of transients

1. A system for providing relief over longer periods than those allowed under emergency clause in general assistance program.
2. Job training, counseling, and placement.
3. Adequate housing.
4. Developing Indian leadership to help care for transients and steer them to services which will meet these needs.

II. To bridge the gap between the Indian and non-Indian cultures

A. Among Indians, both permanent and transients

1. Increasing the level of maturity and independence through adult education in regard to:
 - a. Ability to make realistic decisions about handling money, holding jobs, caring for families, acquiring education, competing with others, etc.

- b. Ability to make responsible contact; with services as needed in any of these areas.

2. Changing attitudes toward:

- a. Use of time, promptness, steadiness in a job, paying of bills, etc.
 - b. Selling one's self [sic] for job, educational opportunity, etc.
 - c. Refusals of service so that these are not construed to be permanent or done on a racial basis.
3. Increasing understanding about life in a city, its demands, its opportunities, its resources; and developing Indian leadership which can assist in working with non-Indians in this regard.
4. To overcome the feeling among Indians that organizations are so large and impersonal that their service seems to omit a warmth for people and a concern about their adjustment; i.e., in schools, relationship of client to worker.

B. Among non-Indians

- 1. Recognition that the long history of dependence on others for all facets of handling personal affairs makes the Indian today an immature and dependent person who has a lot to learn in becoming a self-sufficient individual.
- 2. Recognition that in spite of this history of dependence, Indians are capable as are all human beings of becoming well-adjusted mature people provided they have training, economic security, and social outlets.
- 3. Recognition that the basic economic needs are those of all people and can only be met by job, housing, and credit rating.

III. To strengthen the spiritual ties of Indians

- A. Need to acquaint Indians with variety of churches available to them
- B. Need to make them feel welcome and comfortable in attending the church of their choice.
- C. Need to steer them to churches from which they can choose a church home.

IV. To determine Omaha's share in possible assistance from Federal Government in meeting needs of Indians

- A. From grants which may be made to local communities for work among Indians (including job training and adult education).

- B. In integrating services of Federal, State, and County Government as withdrawal program goes into effect and state, county, and cities have to assume load of services for Indians formerly carried by Indian Affairs Bureau.
- C. In cooperating with organizations in seeking at the state level a permanent Commission on Human Rights, one section of which could handle Indian Affairs, which in turn could assist local communities in handling aid to transients.

This list needs only minor correction to make it an accurate description of the unmet needs of the Indians living in Omaha in 1962. In other words, the problems remain essentially the same today as they were six years ago. Many agencies have been doing something with and for Indians, but the basic needs are still unmet.

There is a good deal of public sympathy for the Indian and his "problem." Unlike other minority groups the Indian, after centuries of contact with a white majority, still feels separate and aloof. A resolution of the Indian "problem" is especially urgent in Omaha, but is unlikely to be solved unless an all-out effort is made to help him learn to live in the city. It is highly significant that the Indian has survived and today is increasing in population more rapidly than any other group. All of the efforts to assimilate him have not succeeded. Alexander Lesser's article in the October, 1961, issue of Midway says, "Their existence today reflects the voluntary decision of their members, as citizens of the United States, to maintain traditional group life."

The Indian in Omaha is a special problem that demands special treatment. It is unique not only because they are a minority racial group who have resisted assimilation, but also because they are discriminated against by all groups. There is an additional urgency at the present time because of the legal status of the Omaha tribe and the effects of a cash settlement that is soon to be made.

It was recommended in the report of February, 1955, that:

1. The Family and Children's Division encourage existing public and private casework agencies to increase their services to Indians through intensive interpretation of services available and, where possible, through the development of new techniques in giving service so as to reach the transient Indian in particular.
2. The Group Work and Recreation Division encourage existing agencies to increase their services in group work and informal education to Indians so that they may have greater opportunities for becoming acquainted with the non-Indian culture.
3. United Community Services initiate conferences with the local Indian Agent, the Nebraska State Departments of

Health and Welfare, the appropriate state officials appointed to deal with human rights, and with the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs to:

- a. determine the timing in the Federal withdrawal program
 - b. ascertain whether funds are available or can be made available to use in adult education of Indians for job training and orientation to city life.
 - c. determine what recourse Omaha has in handling the financial needs among transient Indians who are in this community.
4. United Community Services join with other organizations to increase the efforts of the State of Nebraska on behalf of Indians, either through the creation of a permanent Commission on Human Rights, or failing this, through a special Committee in the Legislature on Indian Affairs.
 5. A social worker be hired to fill a new position on the staff of preferably the United Community Services Social Planning Unit, or, second preference, on the staff of the Urban League. This worker should be trained and experienced in community organization, planning, and coordination of services. This person should be, preferably, part Indian or at least acquainted with problems of reservation life, and as sensitive to the spiritual needs as to the material needs of Indians.
 - a. the position of Indian Affairs secretary should be established for a period of two years, at the end of which time the program should be evaluated by the Social Planning Unit of the United Community Services.

The above recommendation was followed and an Indian worker was employed in 1957 by the Urban League. For a number of reasons, this arrangement did not prove as satisfactory as had been expected, and the staff position was discontinued at the end of the first year. The committee again considered the needs for services and requested the Board of Trustees of the Omaha City Mission to assume the responsibility of coordinating the services of the agencies working with Indians. However, funds were not budgeted for this service at that time.

In 1958 the Omaha City Mission was reorganized and incorporated under the name of Omaha City Mission Society. The old Neighborhood House building at 22nd and Cass was closed, and the program was completely reorganized and moved to the present building at 22nd and Burt in September, 1958. Construction was started on a new headquarters building at 35th and Blondo in the fall of 1958. The new center, called Wesley House, was opened to the public on July 1, 1959. A third center, called Hilltop Center, was also opened at 30th and Grant in the summer of 1959. For the

next two years the agency was unable to consider a more extensive Indian service because of the demands upon staff and budget to expand the program areas in the three centers. However, other agencies, especially the YWCA, had expanded their Indian services in their work with the women and provided a meeting place for family groups.

In the meantime there had been a growing interest on the part of some of the leaders of the Methodist Church in Nebraska for work to be done with the Indians in and near Omaha by the Methodist Church. An Indian Work Committee was set up to consider the ways this might be accomplished. A decision was reached by the committee at their meeting in Grand Island, Nebraska, on January 30, 1962, to recommend to the Board of Missions of the Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Church to make an annual subsidy available to the Omaha City Mission Society to help support the employment of an Indian worker on the staff of the agency. The recommendation was accepted by the Board of Missions of the Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Church, and an annual allocation of \$2000 has been approved for this purpose. It is understood that this amount will be appropriated each year so long as the work is continued and the funds are needed.

The Nebraska Conference Woman's Society of Christian Service has approved a Conference Asking for \$4000 for the Conference year beginning July 1, 1962, to be added to the allocation from the Board of Missions to finance an Indian worker on the staff of the Omaha City Mission Society for the first full year of employment. It is the hope and expectation of the Woman's Society of Christian Service that the Budget Committee of the United Community Services will approve the inclusion of \$2000 in the budget of the Omaha City Mission Society for the last half of the calendar year of 1963; and an annual appropriation of approximately \$4000 beginning in January, 1964, for this new position. It is assumed that any additional amounts needed to support this new work will be provided by the Board of Missions and/or the Woman's Society of Christian Service of the Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Church.

The initiating of this work that was assigned to the Omaha City Mission Society in 1958 had to be postponed until this time [1962]. However, the agency is now ready to assume the responsibility and has a well-qualified person who has been accepted by the Personnel Committee and the Board of Trustees of the agency.

As an agency, we are concerned about the Indian in Omaha because of our long history of working with them at Neighborhood House. Our experience has shown that the needs of this minority group cannot be met by the present methods. We are convinced that the time of a full-time worker who will be able to coordinate all of the available services is essential.

The proposal we are making is an extension of our present work with Indians and is not a new field of service for our agency. It differs from what we have done in the past insofar as we have not been able to give the services of a full-time trained worker to do this especially difficult task. The new staff member will help them to make the adjust-

ments necessary for urban living and, even more important, will become a person with whom they can identify and one to whom they will turn in times of need.

We would suggest the rewriting of No. 5 under the above recommendations to read as follows:

That a qualified, trained worker be hired by the Board of Trustees of the Omaha City Mission Society upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee and the Executive Director to fill a new position on the staff of the agency to be known as "Indian Word Coordinator." This person should be, preferably, an Indian or at least acquainted with the problems of Indians who are attempting to adjust to urban life, and to be sensitive to their spiritual and material needs. He should be able to identify himself with the Indian community, and at the same time help them to make the adjustments necessary to live happy and productive lives in the urban community.

The report of the Indian Affairs Committee of February, 1955, outlined the "Job Description" for the position of Indian worker as follows:

I. Employment and Vocational Training

- A. To stimulate firms to carry out fair employment practices toward Indians.
- B. To make studies of the labor, employment, and business trends as they affect Indians.
- C. To assist in the screening, selection, and placing of Indians in keeping with their skills.
- D. To serve, assist, or advise and counsel with groups concerned with improving the economic and employment condition of Indians.
- E. To give vocational guidance and occupational information to individual Indians and groups by assisting them to prepare for, choose, enter upon, and progress in and adjust to occupational fields.
- F. To cooperate with and coordinate employment plans and activities in such a way as not to duplicate the work of the Nebraska State Employment Service.

II. Education

- A. To assist Indians in attaining an understanding of the value of all types of education.
- B. To work with Indians individually or in groups toward interpreting the educational requirements of the community and its facilities, and the need for Indian cooperation.
- C. To work with the school authorities and teachers toward interpreting the special characteristics, needs, and problems of Indian children and their families.

- D. To assist the adult education department of public schools and other groups to interpret to Indians the benefits to be derived from the existing vocational guidance and training facilities in the schools, as well as the adult education program.

III. Housing

- A. To work with real estate operators and builders to stimulate their fair rental and sale policies.
- B. To work with Indian families and individuals to develop higher occupancy standards and to improve neighborhood surroundings.
- C. Recognizing that many common communicable diseases are directly related to overcrowding and poor housing conditions; to work with appropriate authorities toward alleviation of these conditions.

IV. Community Services

- A. To assist in further studies and surveys which may be required to determine the social welfare needs among Indians.
- B. To carry out effective programs designed to bring the resources of the community in touch with the needs of the Indian people and vice versa.
- C. To seek out, develop, and train Indian leadership.
- D. To serve on, cooperate, and counsel with groups and organizations (Indian and non-Indian) concerned with improving the health, welfare, housing, recreation, and educational services and facilities as related to Indians.

V. Religious

- A. To cooperate with the Omaha Council of Churches and other organized religious groups in assisting Indians to locate and use the religious facility of their choice.

VI. Transiency

- A. To assist Indians to understand that transiency is a problem which makes it difficult and often impossible for agencies and organizations to help them, and to assist Indians to recognize and accept the need for stability because this will materially increase their acceptance by the community at large.
- B. To explain to Indians the specific resident requirements of public and private health and welfare agencies and how these affect the ways in which service can be given.
- C. To assist the public and private health and welfare agencies to understand the reasons for transiency among Indians and to develop ways of giving service in spite of this factor where at all possible.

This is a very comprehensive description and should stand essentially as stated above with the following additions:

1. To establish a relationship with the Indian Agent at Winnebago and the key staff members of the Indian Bureau on the reservation, and the council leadership; and to seek their cooperation and support in establishing relationships with Indians who will be moving to Omaha.
2. To establish a personal counseling relationship with Indian families and individual Indians living in Omaha in order to be more effective in helping them in securing jobs, housing, medical care, education, etc.
3. To begin coordinating a working relationship as soon as possible with
 - a. The Indian families now being served at Neighborhood House, and
 - b. The Indian families now living in buildings that will be demolished by the Interstate Highway right-of-way toward preparing them for movement into new neighborhoods.

From a report entitled "A Discussion of the Dynamics of Indian Work in Omaha" by Rev. Homer Noley, dated October 17, 1962, pp. 1 - 5.

We should recognize that the majority of the people with whom we work are representative of a cultural attitude which has been perpetuated in a reservation situation. Even though a family may have lived off the reservation for a considerable length of time, they are not immune to the influences of reservation life. The parents of a family with whom we have had close contact for some time are leaders of the Peyote Cult. This fact proved to be quite detrimental to their situation once when they applied for assistance after finding themselves in a tight spot. It was not a direct detriment, for the worker had no idea of their connection with the cult. The problem was that it made certain parts of their story inexplicable.

Vestiges of a communal system of life still survive and occasionally manifest themselves in various ways. In housing it presents a problem. It is not uncommon to find two or even more families living in the same apartment. At least once I found two families living in a one-room efficiency apartment. In another case a woman said that she had been walking to various parts of the city borrowing money from relatives to help them out of a tight situation. When I suggested that it might be a good idea to return the money and perhaps we could work out something else, she replied, "But this is the Indian way of life; we are willing to help one another in hard times." There is perhaps something of this attitude in the minds of some who present themselves for public assistance. The communal system of life was non-competitive, thus people who have this kind of background are ill-prepared for a highly competitive life. We are speaking of economy rather than politics.

There are some for whom their background and present aspirations form two poles, and they are caught in the tension between the two poles. They have not yet broken the effects of their background, but they aspire to make a good life for themselves wherever they may be. These are usually young people who may or may not have had some education -- usually they do have. Generally, these people leave the reservation believing that opportunities are greater in the industrial areas. It is critically important to know how to confront this person. He has not broken all the reservation influences, but he does not want his background to interfere with whatever progress he may be making. Historically, the reservation symbolizes the fact that the Indian was not wanted in society. When we suggest to an Indian person that he should return to the reservation, it may be taken as a cruel reaffirmation of an ancient prejudice. We are, in effect, telling him that he is still not wanted.

A curious struggle seems to be engaging the lives of many of the Indian people. This struggle is another exemplification of the polarity mentioned earlier. In this case, however, it pervades the lives of both the young and the old -- the educated and uneducated.

The Indian, as does any ordinary person, possesses (or is possessed by) the yearning to attain a degree of independence. He wants to be self-sufficient to the extent that his family may have an adequate living, and that in the eyes of his fellow man he may receive even a small share of the respect paid to human dignity. Poverty in a land of plenty is degrading. It speaks of personal failure -- regardless of whether he had access to opportunity or not. He knows -- or suspects -- how society will judge him and so he judges himself. To be so dreadfully in need of assistance from society is itself painful; to sit in an office and hear criticism directed against him is the pain of a thousand daggers thrust into his soul. Thus we may add to this frustration and force him to seek other alternatives. Alcoholism is the disease of troubled men; dope addiction is the result of a futile attempt to escape frustration. Both alcoholism and dope addiction are causes only in the most immediate sense. Ultimately, they are effects of causes long preceding their present manifestation. If, in our judgment, family disorder is the result of alcoholism, we ought at least to seek some discernment of the cause of that particular alcoholism if we intend to be of any help to the family.

Obviously, this is impossible to accomplish for every individual. But if that individual is a member of an ethnic group whose responsiveness in life was conditioned by an environment sufficiently distinct from that which is commonly, if arbitrarily, accepted as the "norm," then we may be able to deal adequately with these special cases -- that is, if one has prior knowledge of the particular environmental factors involved and if he has proper sympathy for the people whom he serves. Some examples of environmental factors influential among reservation dwellers in Nebraska may include the following:

1. inequity of treatment in law enforcement,
2. lack of employment opportunities,
3. non-competitive economy,
4. low economic standards, and
5. low educational standards and opportunities.

The benefits of federal assistance in terms of medical care and other important services provide the necessary sense of security.

There are inevitable attempts to meet the frustrations and disillusionments of urban life by seeking to reclaim the benefits of federal assistance. This only leads to further disillusionment for, according to BIA and Tribal Council policy, "off-reservation Indians" are not eligible to use reservation facilities without charge. The attempt to reclaim these privileges (which for some is a major alternative to frustrations met in society) becomes a serious problem when there is someone trying to institute the attempt as a movement involving a large segment of the Indian population in Omaha, especially when they are being led on by some opportunist in the law profession. . . .

What this implies is that we need a close working relationship with the BIA in order that we will know how to confront situations such as this. We need also to be willing to share information with the Bureau when called upon. This makes it even more important for us to make sure that our information is accurate.

Here is a matter with which I am concerned. Some agencies point with pride to the fact that they do not make any ethnic distinctions when recording a case. Good intentions are involved, of course, but I think that there is something we ought to take into consideration. When we do this, we are saying to others, "Look, we do not discriminate against other races." The problem of discrimination is one involving ethics, whereas keeping records intrinsically has nothing to do with ethics. Ethically, we ought not make any distinctions. That means simply that people should be treated individually and with equal respect in the disposition of a case. But for purposes of records and greater understanding of the people we serve, it seems to me that it would be helpful to record their ethnic background.

Concerning the work itself, it should be recognized that it is a work that requires special attention and the situation will continue to exist indefinitely. There will be no relief until someone initiates and helps develop a trend of progress among the Indians of Omaha. The worker should be someone who understands the dynamics of conflicting environmental and social factors and how they apply to this particular ethnic group. An he should be someone who pursues the task with the expectation that he can play a vital role in initiating the trend of progress not only for the Indian population, but also the total society.

PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

URBAN AGENCY FORM

WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?	
WHAT IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL AND OTHER EMPLOYEES IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?	
HOW MANY INDIANS WORK IN YOUR AGENCY?	
HOW MANY INDIANS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION TYPICALLY WORK WITH?	
WHY DO INDIANS IN YOUR COMMUNITY COME TO YOUR AGENCY?	
WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS OF THE INDIANS WHO COME TO YOUR AGENCY?	
HOW DOES YOUR AGENCY DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS?	
DO INDIANS WHO COME TO YOUR AGENCY HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS DIFFERENT FROM NON-INDIANS?	
WHAT PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT DO INDIANS FACE WHO ARE NEW TO THE CITY?	

URBAN AGENCY FORM
PAGE 2

IS YOUR AGENCY PREPARED TO HELP MIGRATING INDIANS WITH THEIR PROBLEMS?	
HOW LONG HAS YOUR AGENCY BEEN IN CONTACT WITH INDIANS?	
HAVE YOUR PERSONNEL HAD ANY SPECIAL TRAINING IN DEALING WITH INDIAN PEOPLE?	
IS YOUR AGENCY AS SUCCESSFUL IN DEALING WITH INDIANS AS IT IS WITH NON-INDIANS?	

DO INDIANS IN YOUR CITY HAVE ANY
SPECIAL PROBLEMS?

SANITATION?

HEALTH?

HOUSING?

EDUCATION?

FINDING EMPLOYMENT?

KEEPING A JOB?

DISCRIMINATION?

PLEASE SEND US ANY INFORMATION YOUR AGENCY MAY HAVE AVAILABLE THAT RELATES TO
URBAN INDIANS. WE WILL, OF COURSE, PAY ANY COSTS RELATING TO SENDING THESE
MATERIALS.

PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

SEX [N=81]

Male	41%
Female	59
	<u>100%</u>

AGE [N=81]

16 - 23	23%
24 - 40	51
41 - 64	21
Over 65	5
	<u>100%</u>

MARITAL STATUS [N=80]

Single	24%
Married	64
Separated	3
Divorced	3
Widowed	6
	<u>100%</u>

TRIBE [N=79]

Omaha	58
Sioux	17
Winnebago	1
Other	3
	<u>79</u>

LENGTH OF TIME IN LINCOLN [N=78]

Under 30 days	8%
1 - 3 months	10
4 - 6 months	8
7 - 11 months	0
1 - 2 years	9
3 - 9 years	7
10 years or more	58
	<u>100%</u>

DEGREE OF INDIAN BLOOD [N=81]

No answer	1
1/4 - 1/2	7
1/2 - 3/4	9
3/4 - full	64
	<u>81</u>

TIME AT PRESENT ADDRESS [N=79]

Under 30 days	12%
1 - 3 months	19
4 - 6 months	11
7 - 11 months	2
1 - 2 years	23
3 - 9 years	26
10 years or more	7
	<u>100%</u>

DESCENT OF SPOUSE [N=81]

Not applicable	16
European	12
American Indian	49
Oriental	2
Mexican/Spanish	1
Negro-Indian	1
	<u>81</u>

TRIPS TO RESERVATION IN PAST YEAR [N = 71]

Not applicable	12%
None	15
1 or 2	15
Several	42
Many	16
	<u>100%</u>

POWWOWS ATTENDED IN PAST YEAR [N=81]

Not applicable	10%
None	19
1 - 5	68
More than 5	4
	<u>101%</u>

SHOULD RESERVATIONS CONTINUE TO EXIST? [N=80]

Not applicable	2
Don't know	9
Yes	67
No	2
	<u>80</u>